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All Children Matter Hit with \$5.2 Million Fine for Illegally Funneling Campaign Money *Remains Under Investigation Here for Campaign 'Money Laundering' Allegations*

Milwaukee – All Children Matter, the pro-private school vouchers group founded by Michigan Republican billionaire Richard DeVos was leveled with a \$5.2 million fine Friday for illegally funneling money into Ohio campaigns. All Children Matter remains under investigation in Wisconsin after the State Elections Board determined in November 2006 it violated rules about express advocacy in opposing John Lehman's bid for the State Senate.

"This unanimous, bipartisan verdict in Ohio shows All Children Matter has little regard for the rules," said Scot Ross, One Wisconsin Now Executive Director. "Wisconsin's Government Accountability Board should take strong action like Ohio to protect the integrity of Wisconsin's elections and get to the bottom of how All Children operates to evade campaign finance disclosure laws."

In its 5-0 decision, the Ohio Elections Commission ruled that All Children Matter illegally funneled \$870,000 to Ohio through a Virginia PAC, allowing it to exceed the state's \$10,000 limit on PAC contributions. Similar allegations have been made about the organization's actions in Wisconsin. Among those donating to this illegal effort was Akron's David Brennan, Ohio's largest operator of charter schools.

All Children Matter is affiliated with Alliance for Choices in Education (also involved in the Wisconsin Elections Board investigation), run by Wisconsin's George and Susan Mitchell, who have donated thousands of dollars to Wisconsin political candidates. Its network of affiliated groups includes the Alliance for School Choice, which has employed convicted former Republican Wisconsin Assembly Speaker Scott Jensen.

Brennan and his wife have also made a number of contributions to Wisconsin candidates, most notably the maximum total of \$20,000 to Republican Gubernatorial Candidate Mark Green in 2006. According to the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, All Children Matter spent at least \$1 million dollars on a number of Wisconsin elections in 2006, including Green's campaign. The DeVos family has contributed to dozens of Wisconsin Republicans for a total of more than \$30,000.

In the Lehman race, which prompted the complaint by the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Care Professionals and the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, the Elections Board agreed that All Children Matter violated campaign laws for failing to register with the state prior to the \$35,000 it spent directly advocating against Lehman.

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Because of the creation of a new regulator, the Elections Board declined to take action at the time and recommended the incoming Government Accountability Board take up the investigation. In its case, All Children Matter was initially represented by Ray Taffora and Kevin St. John, currently top aides to Wisconsin Attorney General JB Van Hollen. At the time, St. John admitted that not registering All Children Matter in Wisconsin was contrary to state law and stated: “What we’re trying to do here is make the best of a mistake.”

In addition to Wisconsin and Ohio, complaints have previously been filed against All Children Matter in Colorado and Florida. The organization moved its operation to Michigan in July 2007.

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